

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A vehicle key system for verifying identity of
fingerprint information about a user's fingerprint and for
5 controlling pieces of equipment in a vehicle according to a
verification result, said system comprising:

a fingerprint information capturing means for capturing
fingerprint information from a user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint information storage means for pre-storing
10 at least a piece of fingerprint information about an authorized
user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint verification means for verifying identity
of the fingerprint information captured by said fingerprint
information capturing means by comparing it with the authorized
15 user's fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint
information storage means;

a fingerprint information processing means for
performing a plurality of processes on the fingerprint
information captured by said fingerprint information capturing
20 means in a plurality of processing modes, respectively;

a manipulation detection means for detecting at least one
of a predetermined manipulation of an operation unit for
controlling the pieces of equipment in the vehicle and a
predetermined manipulation of a pedal; and

25 a processing mode switching means for switching between
the plurality of processing modes according to the
predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation
detection means.

30 2. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein

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3. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

4. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein
25 said plurality of processing modes include a first processing
mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle
after said fingerprint verification means establishes the
identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second
processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use
30 the vehicle without verification of the identity of the user's

~~fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.~~

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5. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, a second processing mode in which said system can register the user's fingerprint information to said fingerprint information storage means, a third processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and a fourth processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle without verification of the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first processing mode and either one of the second, third, and fourth processing modes according to the predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation detection means.

6. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said operation unit is a wiper switch, a winker switch, or a shift lever, and said pedal is an acceleration pedal, a brake pedal, or a clutch pedal.

7. The vehicle key system according to Claim 1, wherein said operation unit is a one intended for manipulating a

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~~navigation unit for providing a variety of navigation services~~
for users.

8. A vehicle key system for verifying identity of
5 fingerprint information about a user's fingerprint and for
controlling pieces of equipment in a vehicle according to a
verification result, said system comprising:

a fingerprint information capturing means for capturing
fingerprint information from a user's fingerprint;

10 a fingerprint information storage means for pre-storing
at least a piece of fingerprint information about an authorized
user's fingerprint;

a fingerprint verification means for verifying identity
of the fingerprint information captured by said fingerprint
15 information capturing means by comparing it with the authorized
user's fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint
information storage means;

a fingerprint information processing means for
performing a plurality of processes on the fingerprint
20 information captured by said fingerprint information capturing
means in a plurality of processing modes, respectively;

a connecting means for connecting said system with a given
external unit;

a manipulation detection means for detecting a signal
25 applied thereto via said connecting means, said signal
indicating a predetermined manipulation of said external unit;
and

a processing mode switching means for switching between
the plurality of processing modes according to said signal
30 detected by said manipulation detection means.

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9. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can register the user's fingerprint information to said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to said signal detected by said manipulation detection means.

10. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second processing mode in which said system can delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said fingerprint information storage means, and wherein said processing mode switching means switches between the first and second processing modes according to said signal detected by said manipulation detection means.

11. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein said plurality of processing modes include a first processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle after said fingerprint verification means establishes the identity of the user's fingerprint information, and a second

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~~processing mode in which said system can allow the user to use~~
the vehicle without verification of the identity of the user's
fingerprint information, and wherein said processing mode
switching means switches between the first and second
5 processing modes according to said signal detected by said
manipulation detection means.

12. The vehicle key system according to Claim 8, wherein
said plurality of processing modes include a first processing
10 mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle
after said fingerprint verification means establishes the
identity of the user's fingerprint information, a second
processing mode in which said system can register the user's
fingerprint information to said fingerprint information
15 storage means, a third processing mode in which said system can
delete corresponding fingerprint information stored in said
fingerprint information storage means, and a fourth processing
mode in which said system can allow the user to use the vehicle
without verification of the identity of the user's fingerprint
20 information, and wherein said processing mode switching means
switches between the first processing mode and either one of
the second, third, and fourth processing modes according to the
predetermined manipulation detected by said manipulation
detection means.

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